

Benton prosecutor sworn in at federal level

Kristin M. Kraemer, Tri-City Herald

RICHLAND Benton County has a new special federal prosecutor to help with local cases that may benefit from stiffer penalties in U.S. District Court.

Deputy Prosecutor Kristin McRoberts was sworn in Monday as a member of the federal bar and a special assistant U.S. attorney.

McRoberts has been with the Benton County Prosecutor's Office for four years. She learned about her selection six months ago, but had to pass an extensive background check.

"It's a huge honor," said McRoberts, 38.

The ceremony was conducted in Richland by U.S. District Court Judge Ed Shea, who said McRoberts has received "excellent training" under Prosecutor Andy Miller.

In McRoberts' current job, if she comes across cases that are more appropriate for federal prosecution she will have the ability to follow them into federal court. She handles gang cases, which often include firearms, and other felonies.

The last time two state prosecutors here were deputized to assist in the Eastern District of Washington was in 2006 with Frank Jenny of Franklin County and Alex Ekstrom of Benton County. Ekstrom is now a full-time assistant U.S. attorney.

Miller said that when U.S. Attorney Michael C. Ormsby approached him for a recommendation, he was proud to offer up McRoberts' name. She is known for putting in long hours at work, is professional and well prepared, and has the ability to see the big picture, he said.

Ormsby added that McRoberts' selection is recognition of the hard work she has done, and a testament to the "valuable partnership" that local, state and federal law enforcement have been able to build to protect the community.

"Welcome to the family, and we're very pleased that you'll be joining us," Ormsby told McRoberts after handing her a stack of books dealing with federal law and sentencing guidelines.

McRoberts' husband, William Booth, and mother, Bernice Furukawa, attended the ceremony. Also in the gallery were U.S. District Court Clerk James Larsen, Franklin County Prosecutor Shawn Sant and Kennewick Police Chief Ken Hohenberg.

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